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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the audio-tutorial short course as a method for introducing high quality instruction about new problems in international studies (IS) at the college level. The basic equipment to the audio-tutorial approach to learning is a booth with a tape recorder, a study guide, and a notebook with extra readings. Students listen to the tape prepared by faculty from the fields of political science, history, and geography. The tape is supplemented by the readings. Throughout the course students prepare short written assignments. They take an oral test towards the end of the course and a written test upon its conclusion. The positive benefits of the audio-tutorial short course are three: (1) it offers an opportunity to introduce IS into general education (e.g., a 1-hour course on world food problems could be an optional additional hour to an introductory course on American government); (2) the course can be developed by faculty with a minimum investment of time and money; and (3) the institution or college can easily by using this instructional method improve the academic offerings. As an illustration of these benefits, the paper presents a case study describing the adaptation of this teaching method by Bemidji State University in Minnesota. Bemidji State offered no international relations (IR) courses and in terms of IR expertise its faculty was decidedly deficient. Faculty members were given summer stipends to develop prototypes of courses. An audio-tutorial course on conflict was introduced as a one-credit course. Of the 16 students in the course, 11 completed all the evaluation instructions. Evaluations were very positive; the only criticism was that the course was too short. (RM)

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A Multi-purpose Instructional Approach:

An Audio-tutorial Short Course in International Conflict

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Paper presented at 1981 International Studies Association Meeting, Philadelphia

Our purpose in this paper is to describe the multiple used in International Studies of an instructional approach long used successfully in the biological sciences, the Audio-tutorial Short Course. This paper would not have been developed if the authors had not recently left the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the school where this particular course was developed. Each of the authors went to different schools and were confronted with the need to assess the scope of offerings in international relations in new settings. The Nebraska experience was explored for potentially adaptive models which would more quickly expand international studies on the new campus. An analysis of four years of experience with the audio-tutorial short course in international conflict in two schools suggests that this approach may offer a promising response to several new challenges confronting the teaching of international relations.* This instructional approach seems to be especially appropriate because it addressed the following six factors generally characteristic of higher education today:

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1. The generally low norm of global awareness by college students. The state--

characterized by one writer as "the globally handicapped status of our students" is well documented in the report of the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies of 1979 and the recent survey designed and conducted by the Educational Testing Service for the Council of Learning funded by the Office of International Education in the U.S. Department of Education.[1]

2. While surmounting this situation is deemed to be of crucial national importance,[2] there is still uncertainty about how to overcome this low norm of international awareness of students in American colleges and universities.[3]

3. One characteristic frequently seen to impede efforts to expand the international dimension in higher education is the financial stringency faced by most colleges and universities.

4. Another challenge is the growing diversity of the student population including returning adults and more part-time students. This requires a variety of instructional delivery systems; instructional methods and scheduling.

5. Many liberal arts colleges throughout the country are re-examining, revising and revitalizing their general education requiremtns. Many of the revisions include an international dimension of non-western culture provision.

6. Finally, although national reviews can help stimulate the development of international studies program by elevating the issue, it is only at the local level that the troublesome issues of the academic organization and scholarly success will be addressed and related to the institution's mission and distinctive capabilities.[4]

The Audio-tutorial Short Course in International Conflict was developing initially at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a means of providing off-campus

instruction in various learning centers throughout the state, one being 500 miles from the main campus. The course was one component of the curricular development which was supported by the NDEA title VI International Studies Center. At the time the course was developed, it was the first of its kind in the country. From the beginning, its versatility was apparent. It was used at the same school as a module in an introductory level Freshman Seminar, as a one-hour elective, and as a course to introduce returning adults to International Studies. More recently it was used at Bemidji State University in Minnesota as a means of beginning the process of internationalizing a rather traditional, parochial set of general education requirements in the social sciences. In the future, it will be offered as a correspondence course at the University of Wyoming. It also proved to be a course which a faculty member could develop during the academic year without requiring released time.

The audio-tutorial approach to learning is a system without formal lectures, recitation or laboratory sessions. The basic equipment is a booth with a tape recorder and a notebook with extra readings. For the course, students listen to cassette tapes prepared by the faculty from three fields, political science, history and geography. They listen to these tapes while following a specially developed study guide which is carefully integrated with the tape. They have access to a notebook of extra readings and to a slide projector in the same area in order to view a special presentation. The students prepare short written assignments during the course which are read by the instructors; they take an oral test towards the end of the course and a written test upon its conclusion. An instructor's guide accompanies the course. Within certain limits, the students can pick the specific times for listening to the tape; the student is lead through the tapes by reading the study guide. The student is

advised by the tape as well as the study guide of the time and directions for taking quizzes and tests and examining the extra readings and slide presentations.

The following case study of the adaptation by Bemidji State University of the Short Course illustrates its versatility.

Bemidji Case Study

One of seven state universities in the Minnesota system, Bemidji is representative of those regional institutions in American higher education which have tended to remain outside the purview of international studies. In their transformation from specialized institutions--often as colleges providing primary and secondary teachers--to multi-purpose universities in the 1980's and 1970's, these institutions tended to have limited resources that discouraged the establishment of a vigorous undergraduate curriculum that addressed global processes. Perhaps, too, few models of successful programs outside the research institutions contributed to the preservation of general education requirements that might only incidentally touch upon transnational perspectives. As elsewhere, in Bemidji's case, this absence of internal resources and adaptable models reflect not only upon the on campus experiences of its 4,200 students: given a service area comprising one-fourth of the state in which it is to reform as the key educational and service-related agency, Bemidji has an immediate and broad impact on the region's schools, community colleges, and learning publics.

In assuming its responsibilities in the fall of 1980, the new administration at Bemidji State University has sought to identify ways in which to develop a viable but integrated international studies curriculum with specific course experiences to be

common to all student programs. The first step was to inventory resources in place. Existing resources proved to be both intriguing and unique. For example, although there is not a language requirement for the BA degree, and there is little linkage between high school language programs and the University's offerings, foreign languages are a popular elective--in fact, the proportion of students taking two years of French, German, Spanish, Norwegian, and Russian is the highest for the system, even higher than Mankato where a language requirement exists for the BA degree. A small Asian studies minor reflects an earlier promise of an intent to develop area studies programs, yet in a less organized manner, Bemidji State University enrollees continue to give Eurospring and other travel-study programs overseas a surprising vitality. Bemidji will be the first this summer to add a large Oxford hostel component with 160 participants to its Elderhostel program. Both Eurospring and Oxford hostel, plus a string of annual tours, gives Bemidji State University faculty direct experience in overseas cultures, albeit as more proficient tourists. Within the North Country, Minnesota-Scandinavian relations in sports (Finlandia) and popular culture (Sons of Norway) tend to be structured through the faculty, staff, and students at Bemidji. These relations are overt, and tend to give Bemidji its identity within American ethnic terms. Less overt is the academic connection between the Environmental Studies Program, with its research on peat and its participation in the International Peat Society, headquartered in Helsinki. Bemidji and Manitoba and Western Ontario have initiated several programs, at the community college level in vocational education and perhaps at the BS level in Nursing, that illustrates other resources already in place that might be incorporated into a more visible IR commitment.

If the above condensation of the inventory resembles a promotional brief, other items have been quite sobering. First in terms of IR expertise, the faculty is

decidedly deficient; until now, incentives for course development as well as research involvement in IR have been absent. Since the prospects for adding permanent positions to complement are remote, reliance must be placed upon the faculty's willingness to undertake more training. Since library usage by the faculty runs close to 35% compared to the national norm of 10% and 1 out of 3 is already at work using computer-assisted instruction, the possibility of fostering that willingness appears quite strong. One faculty member has already obtained a Canadian Government scholarship for post-graduate study at Toronto and will chair a revised Canadian Studies program upon his return. In terms of course or program experimentation, the faculty is already quite adept, having few qualms about team teaching, participating in interdisciplinary courses, or even in using sophisticated, telecommunication delivery systems (there is one radio and two television stations on campus). However, since teacher licensure boards as well as accreditation agencies continue to be remissive about endorsing an IR requirement, the Bemidji State University faculty would find little external leadership for the preparation of IR courses for students at the undergraduate level.

The process of sensitizing the University community to the need for restructuring the general education requirements to include an IS component is taking place in two inter-locking phases. In the first, emphasis has been placed on getting faculty to address the assumptions carried into the setting of general education objectives. The current social studies requirements consist of five designated courses, taken in at least three of eight departments (Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Industrial Education). The annual bulletin, perhaps wisely, has long since ceased to carry any rationale for either the social studies requirements pro se or the designated courses. Transfer students

with an AA degree from a community college are considered to have met all of the general education requirements--and they comprise up to one-fourth of the incoming population in any recent year. Questions for faculty debate have been generated in workshops, study committees, and now within divisional and departmental gatherings. By and large these can be expressed as follows:

1. What specific outcomes do we expect--and should we expect--from general education?

2. How are our present requirements meeting these expectations?

3. In what ways can we improve student appreciation and awareness of the general education process?

What relationship should exist between the outcomes of general education requirements and the demands of our major programs?

Some research projects on general education have been included in this first phase, with emphasis given to a major testing project in 1981-82 when a sample of freshmen, transfer and exiting students will be evaluated using the ACT-College Outcome Measures Project (COMP), which assesses the end product of general education requirements. However, all these research attempts, including COMP, are frustrated by the absence of sophisticated instruments in IS that are both sophisticated and endemic enough to record student ability to perceive problems and clarify issues within international parameters.

In the second phase the outline of the new general education courses in international studies is emerging. Utilizing both the prestige and commitment of the Faculty Honors Council, which interviews, accepts, and then supervises on a

university-wide basis those students who are highly motivated, an ad hoc committee structure on IS course development has been put into place. Members of the faculty will be given summer stipends to develop prototypes of new common courses in all areas of the existing distribution of general education courses. Guidelines are in place for these faculty experiments:

1. Each course must blend content objectives with overall expectations for the general education requirements, i.e., a course in the sciences must do more than prepare students for the next level of courses in the sciences; it must prepare students to have an appreciation for scientific inquiry and other modes of thought.

2. Each course must draw upon the most effective teaching and learning strategies available at BSU, and be capable of presentation through several delivery systems if at all possible.

It is in this light that the Audio-tutorial Short Course was introduced as a one-credit component in a winter honors course, Introduction to the Social Sciences and History. Although a visiting lecturer might have been used to present a course in IR during this year of study, it was agreed that both students and faculty might consider to view such a course external to the building process--worst would have been the fostering of the assumption that such a lecturer's case studies or classroom emphasis might have led some to the conclusion that IR is "crisis study" and "regional relations." Such course additions would appear to be more appropriate next year, or perhaps better yet to include external lectures within those courses developed by the faculty. Equally considered was intended student response. In its use in NEDA Program, it has proven not only highly acceptable but popular with students of similar backgrounds. Thus, the Short Course appeared to be an inexpensive

and tested experiment at Bemidji.

Of the 16 students in the course, 11 completed all of the evaluation instruments administered throughout the quarter. Existing interviews with the remaining 5 tended to provide critiques in keeping with those given by the other 11.

In the initial class meeting, the Short Course was introduced as the first in a three-part sequence designed to have them become familiar with conflict as a subject of study in the social sciences and history. Conduct for the Short Course was given to a student assistant who agreed to provide scheduled appointments in the afternoons and evenings for each student. Each was encouraged to spend at least one hour each week during the first three weeks to complete the course. In addition to the evaluation form contained in the Short Course itself, another instrument sought to measure learning and appreciation, at the end of the course.

The 11 students tended to be 19 year old sophomores from the school's service region in Northern Minnesota. Typically their high school experiences in IS were mixed, yet with an overwhelming majority (10 out of 11) claiming as the freshmen at Nebraska, that they found few high school courses relevant to an understanding of global processes or even the study of conflict in a specific situation. Much emphasis (7 out of 11) was placed on foreign language study having served as the one linkage between high school experience and college expectations in terms of becoming more familiar with IS--this linkage was not confined to the language or culture studied, and at Bemidji students assumed (9 out of 11) that language study was the only visible route to understanding international relations. All 16 indicated that until they discovered the Short Course they assumed that their general education experience would not touch upon global topics. In identifying those courses they now wanted to include in their programs, 7 out of 11 specifically asked for

variations of the Short Course structure to deal with other contemporary generic processes.

Perhaps the more indicative examples of the impact on the students came in the final examination and concluding questionnaire. During the first week of the Short Course, students seemed to assume that the study of conflict could be pursued from any one perspective or orientation without questioning its assumption or limitations. The low-keyed approach in the Short Course began to trigger questions about these disciplinary orientations. Since Wilson's To the Finland Station was a major reading after the conclusion of the Short Course, it was therefore quite surprising to see students carry Wilson's biographical studies back to International Conflict and Fisher's approach to conflict regulation. Frankly, I had never considered what Vico or Michelets might have wanted to pull out of the study of the American-Vietnamese negotiations--yet three students devised such a framework for their final examination. Also pungent was a class-appreciated but student-initiated critique of Marx's alleged critique of Fisher. Most telling but equally embarrassing considering the students' educational level was their own reflective statements on the existing evaluation instrument in which they rated their overall general knowledge which extended beyond specific college-level course work. Even though only 1 had an American literature course in college, all 11 rated their knowledge of specific areas in American literature to be far more extensive than their knowledge in any area of IS. Lowest on their list of knowledgeable competence was any understanding of international economics. As one student said, "I guess I can tell you about Tom Sawyer, but I can't see where that is going to get me now". This state of reflection was not without its sophistication in that again a majority of those interviewed suggested that the Short Course had helped to trigger a better understanding of what

they might expect from their college programs.

If the Short Course was criticized it was because it was precisely that--short. Upon reflection, it might have been more meaningful for the class had it been used as a quarter-long experience, or perhaps if it could have been accompanied by a sequel on informal global relations. This suggestion will be included in the many that the class and the student assistant will be reporting to the ad hoc faculty committee as it now begins its assessment of the Short Course as a prototype for what may be accomplished in the way of remaking the general education requirements at Bemidji.

Conclusion and Observations

Both the Minnesota and Nebraska experience suggest that the Short Course provides a means for introducing high-quality instruction about new problems in International Studies, e.g., energy, food, environment, limited resources, to a variety of students. There are positive benefits on three fronts: for the student's academic program, for faculty development and for the institution. From the point of view of the student, flexibility of taking courses serially or several at one time. Also, from a practical standpoint, the student who needs an additional hour to become full time has a chance to add a course in International Studies rather than a one-hour activity course in Physical Education. The Short Course offers an opportunity to introduce International Studies into the general education. For example, a one-hour course on world food problems could be an optional additional hour to an introductory course on American Government. It could also serve as an introduction to a major.

In terms of faculty development, the courses are managable, that is, the technical aspects can easily be acquired with a minimum investment of time and

while certain techniques must be followed in the preparation of the tape and organization of the supporting materials, e.g., an instructor wishing to prepare a tape should first prepare a script, deliver it and then edit the script to suit his/her situation, personality and manner of speaking, it does not require extensive training.[5] It also gives a faculty member an opportunity to explore a new dimension in his/her work without making a lifetime commitment. It can also be used to widen and strengthen the faculty members' expertise and he/she can take it to the public. It also may contribute to the improvement of teaching since the instructor must listen to himself or herself on tape and hence, possibly for the first time, hear what the students have been hearing for years. In short, it means that it is a vehicle for self-evaluation.

From the institutional standpoint, uses being made of local resources. Furthermore, with minimum outlay, the institution has the opportunity to deliver a new subject to off-campus audiences.

The approach also offers an alternative to the traditional lecture--discussion format of college classrooms. This is especially important for adults since studies confirm that adult learners least prefer the lecture method of instruction. Since the physical facilities and equipment required for the course are modest (booth, tape recorder, tape, projector), it is easily transportable. Indeed, while the University of Nebraska-Lincoln placed the course only at organized learning centers operated by the University, the students suggested that it be placed in libraries. This could be easily arranged. The approach also contributes to faculty development.

The evaluations and experience by both faculty and students demonstrate the Short Course's ability to provide quality instruction in an array of settings to meet a

variety of student and instructional needs with minimal financial outlay. It is therefore a quick and inexpensive way to upgrade the quality of international studies.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas S. Barrows, et al., College Students' Knowledge and Beliefs: A Survey of Global Understanding, New Rochelle, NY: Change Magazine Press, 1981; E&WV Series VII. A layman's version, focusing on results, of this full report has also been provided--Thomas S. Barrows, et. al., with Nathaniel Hartshorne, What College Students Know and Believe About Their World, New Rochelle, NY: Change Magazine Press, 1981; E&WV Series V.

2. Report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, November 1979.

3. Some recent efforts which address this include: "Lessons from Undergraduate and Graduate International Programs," Panel, 1981 National Conference on Higher Education, American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.; Robert E. Klitgaard, "On Reviewing International Studies," forthcoming in the Journal of Higher Education (mimeograph, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, December 1979; Sven Groennings, "Foreign Policy and the American University: Converging Interests," International Studies Notes, 7, 3-4 (Fall-Winter, 1980-81), 1-5.

5. Step-by-step guidelines are given in S.V. Postlethwait and Frank Mercer, Study Guide: Minicourses--What Are They?, Purdue Research Foundation, Preliminary Version, 1972, 24 pages.